

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 1, 2006

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush:

High energy prices continue to threaten the health and economic well-being of households across the United States, but especially low-income families. No family in our nation should be forced to choose between heating their home and putting food on the table for their children. No senior citizen should have to decide between buying life saving prescriptions or paying utility bills. Unfortunately, these stark choices are a reality for too many Americans across the nation. We strongly urge you to take immediate action to help low-income Americans by supporting an additional \$2.92 billion for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) in FY 2006, and requesting \$5.1 billion for LIHEAP in your FY 2007 budget request, the level authorized in the Energy Policy Act of 2005.

The Energy Information Agency forecasts that households heating with natural gas will experience an average increase of 35 percent over last winter. Households heating with oil will see an increase of 23 percent, and households using propane can expect an increase of 17 percent. Unfortunately, energy prices do not appear to be falling in the near future. In addition, wages are not keeping pace with inflation. The Real Earnings report by the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that the average hourly earnings of production and non-supervisory workers on private nonfarm payrolls were lower in December 2005 than they were a year ago, after accounting for inflation. Working families are continuing to lose ground, meaning more families also need LIHEAP assistance this year. Paychecks are being stretched thinner as families face higher prices for home heating, health care, and education.

Since October 5, 2005, the Senate has voted four times to increase LIHEAP funding to \$5.1 billion. Bipartisan amendments offered to the Department of Defense Appropriations bill, the Transportation, Treasury and HUD Appropriations bill, the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill, and the Tax Reconciliation bill received a majority of the Senate's support. Unfortunately, these amendments were not given the opportunity for a straight up-or-down vote. In December, 63 Senators supported a successful motion to instruct, which directed the Budget Reconciliation Conference Committee to provide \$2.92 billion in additional funding for LIHEAP in FY 2006. Yet, the conference report for the Budget Reconciliation bill includes only \$1 billion, with this spending designated for FY 2007. Procedural maneuvers are preventing vital assistance from reaching Americans. Your leadership on this issue will help ensure that low-income families and seniors get the help they deserve from the federal government.

We respectfully request that you support supplemental funding for LIHEAP in FY 2006, and full funding for the program in FY2007 at its authorized level of \$5.1 billion. We also urge that these resources be allocated in such a way that they will benefit all states and ensure they receive this necessary assistance promptly. American families and seniors have been waiting too long for relief from high energy costs. Thank you for your consideration for this essential request.

Sincerely,



Jack Reed



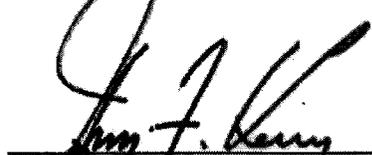
Edward M. Kennedy



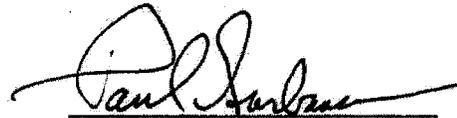
Maria Cantwell



Tom Harkin



John F. Kerry



Paul S. Sarbanes



Robert Menendez



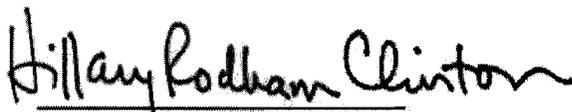
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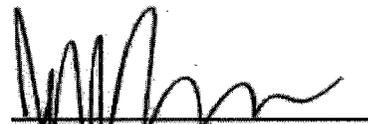
Charles E. Schumer



Debbie Stabenow



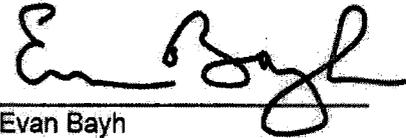
Hillary Rodham Clinton



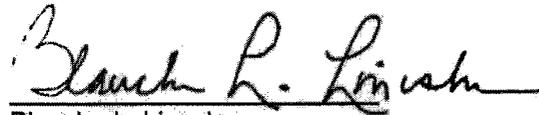
Jeff Bingaman



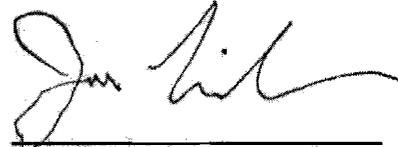
Herb Kohl



Evan Bayh



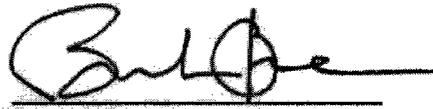
Blanche L. Lincoln



Joseph I. Lieberman



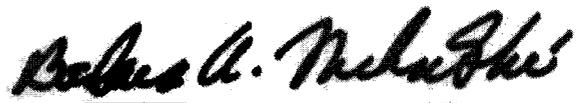
Carl Levin



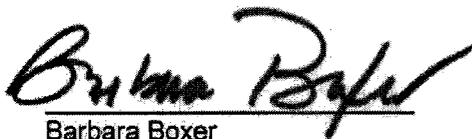
Barack Obama



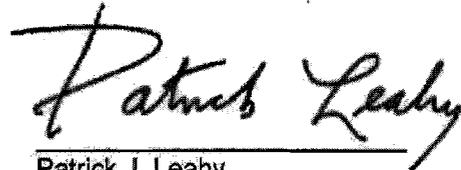
Mary L. Landrieu



Barbara A. Mikulski



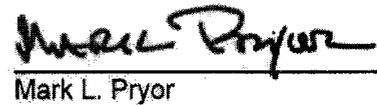
Barbara Boxer



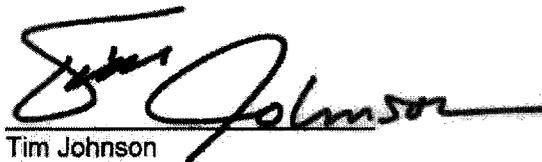
Patrick J. Leahy



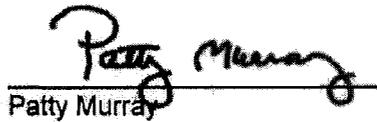
John D. Rockefeller IV



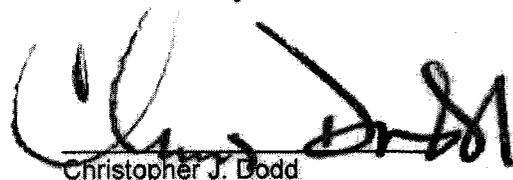
Mark L. Pryor



Tim Johnson



Patty Murray



Christopher J. Dodd